

## Record numbers register in support of National Close the Gap Day

The call to end to health inequality between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other Australians continues to get louder, with a record number of events being held nationwide on Thursday 19 March to mark National Close the Gap Day.

Community groups, health services, schools, businesses, government offices and individuals around Australia are [registering online](#) to hold a Close the Gap event in their homes, workplaces, schools and communities, with last year's record of 1298 events already exceeded.

Over 1,548 National Close the Gap Day events are scheduled for this Thursday, at schools, parks and other locations in Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Brisbane, Adelaide, Coffs Harbour, Mount Isa, Normanton, Darwin, Mt Gambier, and Newcastle.

Close The Gap Campaign Co-Chairs Kirstie Parker and Mick Gooda are encouraged by the groundswell response from everyday Australians to National Close the Gap Day.

"Last year, more than 150,000 people took part in more than 1000 separate National Close the Gap Day events across the country," said Ms Parker. "This year is on track to be even bigger."

Ms Parker, who is also Co-Chair of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, said National Close the Gap Day is an occasion when Australians tell the nation's leaders that they want progress on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health equality.

"The reality is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can expect to live approximately 10 years less than non-Indigenous Australians. But there are practical steps we can take to change this," Ms Parker said.

"We need governments to work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people because real and sustained engagement with our communities is one of the critical success factors."

Mr Gooda, who is also Social Justice Commissioner at the Australian Human Rights Commission, said new research into the high level of undetected chronic conditions in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people demonstrates the significant impact chronic conditions have on life expectancy.

"We have a real opportunity to make relatively large health and life expectancy gains in relatively short periods of time if we detect and treat these chronic conditions.

"There is no room for complacency. Funding for anti-smoking initiatives must continue and we need to fund new initiatives that target chronic conditions such as diabetes, otherwise momentum will be lost," Commissioner Gooda said.

The Close the Gap campaign is Australia's biggest public movement for health equality. It is a coalition of Australia's leading Indigenous and non-Indigenous health and human rights organisations.

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